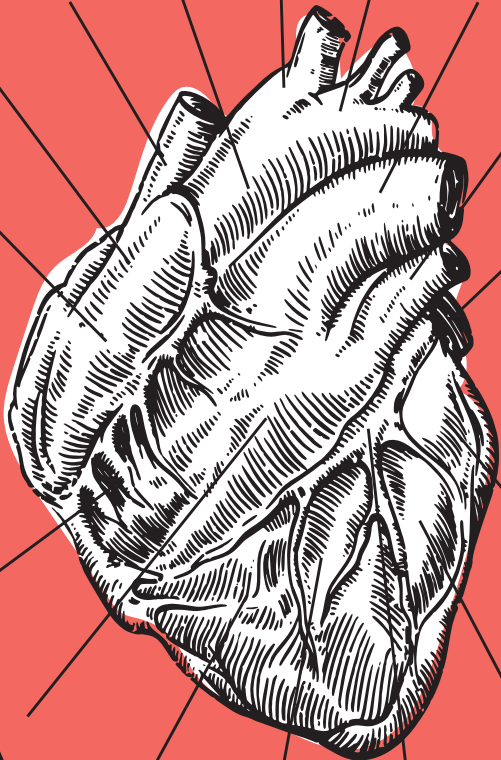


The
M A S C U L I N E
M A N D A T E



God's Calling to Men

WRITTEN BY
Richard D. Phillips

Endorsements

“Egalitarian and chauvinistic thinking have corrupted our ideas about godly manhood. With boldness of heart and pastoral wisdom, Rick Phillips leads us back toward biblical manhood—masculinity grounded in the cultural mandate, the cross, and the ordinary means of grace. May men of the church answer the call of this mandate to stand up and be counted, and to live out their faith courageously as workers, protectors, nurturers, and leaders for Christ.”

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Professor of Bible

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—*Dr. Iain M. Duguid*

Professor of Old Testament

Westminster Theological Seminary, Philadelphia

THE
MASCULINE
MANDATE

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God's Calling to Men

Richard D. Phillips



LIGONIER MINISTRIES

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To Sharon,
my greatest help in this world,
and to our sons, Matthew and Jonathan

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Foreword

What image comes to your mind when you hear the expression “A man’s man”? Is it the picture of an outdoorsman, skilled in hunting and fishing? Might it be the idea of a man capable of building his own house? Is it more along the lines of a tough guy in the mold of John Wayne?

There’s certainly nothing wrong with being an outdoorsman, building one’s own house, or even, within bounds, being the solid John Wayne type. But is that all there is to being a man? The truth is that the Bible gives us God’s picture of a real man, and it doesn’t fit any of our stereotypes.

God begins to paint His picture of manhood in Genesis 1, where we read of man’s creation in the image of God. He continues to work on His portrait in Genesis 2, which tells us that God planted a garden in Eden and put man there to work it and keep it.

Isn’t it interesting that the first thing God says about the role of man is that he is to work? In fact, the necessity and value of work is assumed throughout the Bible and is stated explicitly in a number of Scripture passages. For example, the writer of Ecclesiastes said, “Behold, what I have seen to be good and fitting is to eat and drink and find enjoyment in all the toil with

which one toils under the sun the few days of his life that God has given him, for this is his lot” (Eccl. 5:18). Turning to the New Testament, Paul exhorts us to “work heartily, as for the Lord” (Col. 3:23) and warns that “If anyone is not willing to work, let him not eat” (2 Thess. 3:10). Also, we will be working in the new earth.

I find this biblical emphasis on work quite encouraging. Very few of us men fit any of the stereotypes of the “man’s man.” But we all can fulfill God’s mandate to work. In that sense, we can see ourselves in God’s picture of a real man.

But there’s more to the picture than work. When God put Adam in the garden to work, He gave him Eve as a helper (Gen. 2:18, 21–23). So man is to work and, generally speaking, he is to marry. Of course, there will always be God-ordained exceptions, but God’s normal plan is that men are to take wives and “be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth” (Gen. 1:28). Therefore, the humble working man, toiling faithfully at his job, nurturing and shepherding his wife, and seeking to bring up his children in the discipline and instruction of the Lord, conforms to God’s picture of a real man. He may indeed be a hunter and fisherman, he may be capable of building his own house, or he may even be a John Wayne hero type. But those abilities and character traits are at best secondary to the basic roles of diligent worker and faithful and caring husband and father.

In this excellent book, Rick Phillips covers these subjects and much more in a thoroughly biblical fashion. All that he says is based solidly on Scripture, so he gives us an accurate

FOREWORD

picture of what it means to be God's man. The reader will come away reassured that even though he may possess none of the attributes that the world deems essential for a "man's man," nevertheless he can be one of God's men.

This is not an entertaining book, but it is a valuable book. Every Christian man who reads it carefully and seeks to apply it to his own life will profit immensely. A few will see that their lives already generally conform to the biblical principles Rick sets forth, and will thus be encouraged to keep on living as they are now doing. Others will see attitudes and actions in their lives that fall shy of the biblical pattern for men, and they will be instructed and motivated to seek change where appropriate.

By God's grace, this book will help men to hear those blessed words at the ends of their lives: "Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master" (Matt. 25:23).

—Jerry Bridges
Colorado Springs, June 2009

Preface

It is remarkable to me how easily precious things can be lost. An individual can quickly lose precious possessions such as innocence, integrity, or a good reputation. The church can lose precious things, too, and this seems to be happening today. One ideal we may be losing is that of strong, biblical, and confident Christian manhood. Not long ago, we were all told to get in touch with our “feminine side” (as I’ll note again later, mine is named Sharon), and this sort of cultural foolishness has resulted in many men misperceiving what it means to be a godly man, a loving husband, a good father, and a faithful friend.

This book is written for Christian men who not only don’t want to lose that precious biblical understanding, but who want to live out the calling to true manliness God has given us. We need to be godly men, and the Bible presents a Masculine Mandate for us to follow and fulfill. But do we know what it is? My aim in writing this book is to help men to know and fulfill the Lord’s calling as it is presented so clearly to us in God’s Word.

Again, I have little doubt that today’s problem with true manliness arises in large part from a broader problem in the secular culture. So many young men grow up today without a father—or with a father who is inadequately connected with his

sons—that there is bound to be confusion about masculinity. The secular media bombard us all with images and models of womanhood and manhood that are simply bogus. Meanwhile, in growing numbers of evangelical churches, the presence of strong and godly men seems to have receded in the face of a feminized spirituality. In the affluence of our postmodern Western society, men typically no longer engage in the kind of struggle for survival that used to turn boys into men. Yet our families and churches need strong, masculine Christian men as much—or more—than they ever have. So how do we revive or recover our threatened masculinity? The place to start, as always, is in God’s Word, with its strong vision and clear teaching on what it means not just to be male but to be a man of God.

The purpose of this book is to provide straight, clear, and pointed teaching on what the Bible says to men as men. I write this, not looking down on today’s guy—thankfully, I am neither old enough nor grumpy enough for that yet!—but as a brother in Christ who believes in the Bible and has had reason (both personal and pastoral) to search God’s Word for guidance on manhood. This is a journey I have been on for quite a while. What does it mean for me to be the Christian man that I want to be, that my family needs me to be, and that God has made and redeemed me in Christ to be? For me, the journey has involved a blend of renewal and repentance. Things that I thought were manly really aren’t, and things that God has called me to do have needed to be done. The result, however, has been both clarity and calling—and what a blessing these are!

My hope and prayer is that other men and churches can be

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helped by this tour through the Bible's teaching on manhood, for the Masculine Mandate to which God calls us is intended to bear great fruit for His glory in this fallen world. If we do not seek truth in this matter from God, then something not only precious but essential will be lost from our churches: biblical models of godly masculinity for our boys and for male converts to follow, and the manly leadership God has ordained as intrinsic to the strength and health of His church.

I want to express my thanks to the Session and congregation of Second Presbyterian Church in Greenville, South Carolina, for their devoted support of my ministry of God's Word. What a joy it is to preach the Scriptures to such an eager Christian family! I also thank my many friends at Ligonier Ministries who have partnered with me in every aspect of this book—especially my editors, Greg Bailey and Kevin Meath, who have made terrific contributions. Finally, I thank my faithful and loving wife, Sharon, for her model of godly femininity and the loving support that she so freely gives to me, along with our five children, who cheerfully endure numerous sacrifices so that their parents may serve the Lord. To Him be glory.

Part One

UNDERSTANDING OUR MANDATE

MAN IN THE GARDEN

I think it's not a bad idea to begin this book on masculinity by recalling something I read in a sports magazine in a barber shop. Not a hair salon—a barber shop! The article was about the new nonconventional sports, focusing especially on Moto-X freestyle motocross. These are the sports of people who jump motorcycles over buildings or hang from the handlebars while somersaulting their bikes fifty feet in the air. The leading figure in this sport is Brian Deegan, who, it turns out, recently became a Christian.

In 1997, Deegan formed the Metal Mulisha freestyle motocross team. Over the next eight years, Deegan and his friends won numerous races and jumping competitions while establishing their reputation for mayhem, destruction, and violence. Their lifestyle was emblemized by their tattoos and Nazi symbolism, and focused mainly on motorcycles, alcohol, drugs, sex, and fighting.

Three things happened to Deegan that led to a radical change. The first was that his girlfriend became pregnant and insisted on keeping their child. The second was a failed attempt at a high-speed midair backflip in the 2006 X-Games that nearly ended Deegan's life and led to months of physical rehabilitation. The third was his agreement to attend church with his girlfriend. To his surprise, he didn't hate it and, before long, he had come to saving faith in Jesus. As a result, he married his girlfriend and quit drinking and drugs; another result was that he invited his fellow Metal Mulisha bikers to study the Bible with him. One by one, many were born again to faith in Jesus. "He kept telling us how much the Bible changed his life," one recalled. "I felt like I had to listen." Deegan, once the epitome of the angry, foul-mouthed insurrectionist, now sits with a Bible open on his lap and tells sports journalists that he wants his daughter to be able to look up to his example as a Christian father.¹

I have kept up with Deegan from time to time since reading that article. If you check up on this young Christian, you will find that he has plenty of growth in godliness still to do, but what is most important is that he knows it. When asked in one interview about the obvious changes in his lifestyle, Deegan answered with these immortal words: "I had kids and I have to be a role model to represent to my kids. . . . I had to grow up, had to be a man, had to be a father, and so I did it, dude."² My guess is that as Deegan grows as a Christian, he will learn more and more that he has not yet "done it, dude." There is plenty of growing up that all Christian men still need to do. But here is the question that comes to my mind: once a Brian Deegan

realizes God is calling him to be a man, where can a dude like him find out how?

When it comes to practically every question about God's intentions for men and women, the answer is almost always the same: go back to the garden. When Jesus was asked about marriage (Matt. 19:4–6), He answered from Genesis 2. Likewise, when Paul was discussing the role of women in relation to men (1 Tim. 2:11–14), he found his answers in Genesis 2. The New Testament sees issues of gender and male-female relationships answered in the opening chapters of the Bible: the basic teaching on creation in Genesis 1 and the record of God's specific dealing with the first man and woman in Genesis 2. It is here that we should search for the Bible's most basic teaching on manhood.

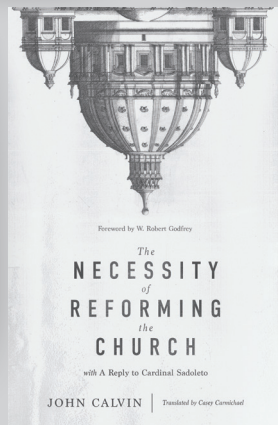
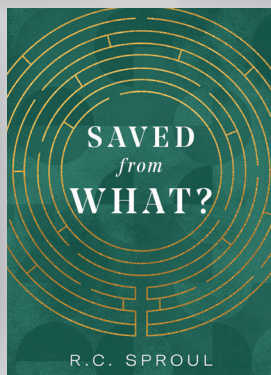
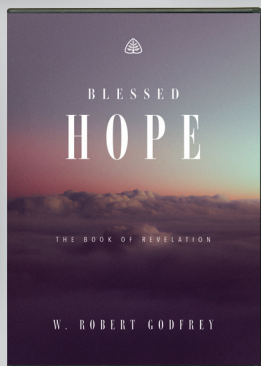
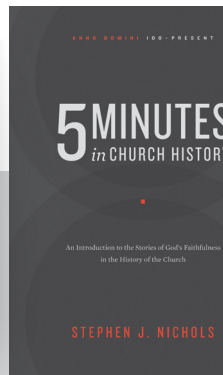
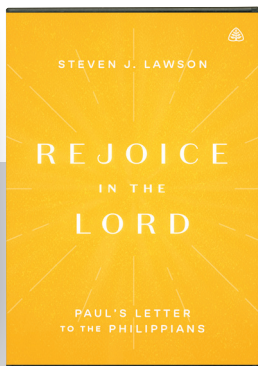
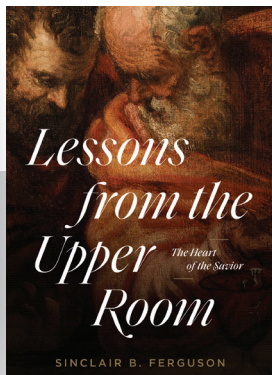
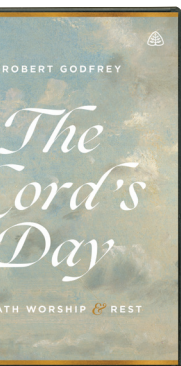
MANHOOD: THE WHO, WHERE, WHAT, AND HOW

Just as we will never understand God's rules for marriage and His calling for husbands and wives unless we understand Genesis 2, we likewise will never understand what it means to be a man—single or married—without studying this vitally important chapter. Genesis 2 tells us four essential things about man: *who* man is, *where* man is, *what* man is, and *how* man is to fulfill his calling. This is obviously very important stuff, essential to an accurate understanding of our calling as men.

Who We Are: Spiritual Creatures

Genesis 2:7 tells of God's special formation of man: “then the LORD God formed the man of dust from the ground and

We want to see men and women around the world connect the deep truths of the Christian faith to everyday life.



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